

Region 2 RCRA Corrective Action Site Fact Sheet

LAST UPDATE: January 4, 2000

UNION CARBIDE CARIBE, LLC (UCCLLC)

EPA ID#: PRD980594618

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: PEÑUELAS

FACILITY LOCATION: ROAD 127, KM 17.3, BO. TALLABOA, PUERTO RICO

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Other (Former) Names of Site:

Union Carbide Caribe, Inc. (UCCI)

Site Description:

The facility is located on the south coast of Puerto Rico, on State Road 127 in the Municipio (town) de Peñuelas, approximately 7 miles west of the city of Ponce. The site occupies about 680 acres of generally level land that has mostly been reclaimed from wetlands by filling. The facility was formerly a large petrochemical complex, and is broadly divided into two areas, the Main Plant area, and the Puntilla area. The Puntilla area occupies most of a peninsula extending to the southwest from the Main Plant area. The peninsula extends into the Caribbean Sea, and separates Guayanilla Bay to the west and Tallaboa Bay to the east. The facility ceased production operations in 1985, although it served as a terminal for the bulk storage of chemical products and operated a wastewater treatment plant for a number years thereafter. The facility is adjacent to a number of mostly defunct chemical and petroleum refining facilities, the most notable of which is CORCO, immediately to the north. Otherwise, the land use in the area is generally residential and agricultural.

Site Responsibility:

Clean-up at this site is being addressed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under authority of the of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Status:

In 1993, Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) which mandated that all Federal agencies develop strategic plans, establish annual performance plans (which set objective, quantifiable, and measurable annual targets and goals), and produce annual program performance reports that compare actual performance to the annual goals. The goals, as far as RCRA facilities are concerned, are that by 2005, the States and EPA will verify and document that 95 percent of the 1715 high priority RCRA facilities identified nationwide will have “current human exposures under control,” and that 70 percent of these facilities will have “migration of contaminated ground-water under control.” UCCLLC is one of these facilities.

Threats and Contaminants:

The major threat is the result of the unintended release of contaminants from identified solid waste management units into the soil beneath the facility and to the ground water within that soil. These contaminants include: benzene, ethylbenzene, 2-methylnaphthalene, naphthalene, styrene, toluene, and xylene. There are 36 of these units that have been identified. Some of these units, specifically surface impoundments (lagoons), were used to intentionally manage hazardous waste on-site. The sludges from these lagoons were dewatered and disposed in a landfill on-site.

Because of its relatively high salt content, the ground water is not currently used for drinking. The released contaminants however represent a potential threat to the surface water of the Caribbean Sea and to its nearshore ecosystem. In addition, some ground water in the regional area is reportedly used for agriculture and other purposes from unregistered private wells, although these wells would not be expected to be impacted by the potential sources of contamination at this site.

The 36 identified solid waste management units were initially categorized into one of four groups. The groups represent: (1) units that are adjacent to each other, require an operating permit, and have an interim permit to operate; these units shared the same critical cleanup issues; (2) units that have an interim permit to operate and were required to close; (3) units which had not been investigated for releases, and (4) units that are classified as process sewers and have not been investigated for releases.

Cleanup Approach

Cleanup Status/Corrective Action:

The site is being addressed by Union Carbide, under EPA oversight, in two measures: Interim Corrective Measures and long-term corrective measures directed at cleanup of the entire site.

Response Action Status:

Interim Corrective Measures: The group 1 units, those requiring the most immediate attention regarding corrective action, were investigated. Under a 1988 permit, these units have had their hazardous waste chemically and physically stabilized. Ground-water pumping has served to prevent the movement of the contaminated ground-water off-site.

Entire Site: The group 2 units have generally had their hazardous waste removed and disposed in accordance with RCRA regulatory requirements. The group 3 units have been investigated further and it has been determined that of the 18 units in this group, 12 do not require further corrective action activities. The remaining six units are being investigated to determine the extent of contaminant release by these units to the environment and the risks posed by these releases. The four group 4 units have still not been investigated.

Cleanup Progress:

Corrective action, in the form of ground-water pumping, continues as part of the extended 1988 permit requirements. The group 2 units are in the process of closure and the clean-up of soil and ground-water contamination will be done as part of the unit-specific closure requirements. The six group 3 units that are being investigated to determine the extent of releases and associated risks, is also undergoing a Corrective Measures Investigation. This report is scheduled to be submitted to EPA on January 30, 2000. The group 4 units have not been investigated.

Permit Status

Permit Status:

UCCLLC is continuing corrective action under the 1988 Permit. The Permit expired in 1993, but has been automatically extended until a new Permit is issued. The Permit is solely for activities associated with corrective action requirements. UCCLLC has submitted an application for a Permit renewal, and this is in the final stages of review.

Site Repository:

Copies of the 1988 Permit, the Draft Permit, supporting technical documents, and correspondence are available for public review at the following locations: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 2, 290 Broadway, New York, New York - 15th floor file room, telephone (212) 637-4166; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Caribbean Environmental Protection Division, Centro Europa Building, Suite 417, 1492 Ponce De Leon Avenue, Santurce, Puerto Rico, 00907-4127, telephone (787) 729-6951; and Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, National Plaza Building 431 Ponce De Leon Avenue, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico 00917, telephone (767) 8181. The inspection of some of these documents may require a formal request under the United States Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).